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AUTHOR Reed, Vincent E.
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ABSTRACT

The speaker briefly profiles the District of Columbia Public School system, describes how the district organized to introduce performance-based education, and outlines the administrative structure supporting the program. (IRT)

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A COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS MODEL

BY

DR. VINCENT E. REED*

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BEFORE LAUNCHING INTO A DISCUSSION ON THE COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM, I WANT BRIEFLY TO DESCRIBE OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE SETTING.

OURS AS YOU PERHAPS KNOW IS A UNIQUE SITUATION, THAT OF BEING THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL. WE ARE CONSEQUENTLY, BOTH A LOCAL AND STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY, ACCOUNTABLE BOTH TO OUR CITY-STATE AND TO CONGRESS.

WE ARE A MODERATELY LARGE METROPOLITAN SYSTEM SERVING AN URBAN AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. OUR STUDENT POPULATION IS ROUGHLY 121,000 AND DECLINING, A PHENOMENA THAT APPEARS TO BE NATIONWIDE. NINETY-FIVE PERCENT OF THIS STUDENT POPULATION IS BLACK.

THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 6,500 TEACHERS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SOME 600 ADMINISTRATORS AND SUPERVISORS.

OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM IS DECENTRALIZED AND ORGANIZED INTO SIX ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONS. EACH IS HEADED BY AN ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT. SPREAD ACROSS THESE REGIONS ARE 169 REGULAR

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*SUPERINTENDENT, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ELEMENTARY, JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS. ADD TO THIS, 26 SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS.

THE FACT THAT STUDENTS ACROSS THE NATION ARE NOT PERFORMING UP TO CONVENTIONAL EXPECTATIONS (THIS IS TO SAY AT GRADE LEVEL) IS NOT UNKNOWN TO ANY OF US HERE. TWO MANY OF OUR STUDENTS CANNOT READ OR HANDLE SIMPLE ARITHMETIC COMPUTATIONS OR CAN BARELY DO SO. THEY HAVE CONSEQUENTLY HAD DIFFICULTY MASTERING THAT CLUSTER OF SKILLS ALL OF US NEED TO LEAD REASONABLE SELF-SUFFICIENT AND SATISFYING LIVES.

PAINFULLY AWARE OF THE FAILURE OR INADEQUACIES OF OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF TEACHING JOHNNY AND JANE HOW TO READ AND WRITE AND CALCULATE, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS OPTED TO TRY YET ANOTHER INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH USING THE COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM.

RATHER THAN GIVE YOU A NARRATIVE HISTORY OF OUR COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM, I HAVE CHOSEN TO TALK BRIEFLY ABOUT <u>WHAT IT IS</u> FOR US AND HOW WE HAVE GONE ABOUT PUTTING IT IN PLACE. I HASTEN TO ADD THAT IT IS NOT YET ENTIRELY IN PLACE AND HAS YET TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN A SYSTEMWIDE SENSE. I SHOULD SAY, HOWEVER, THAT OUR FIRST YEAR (1976-77) WAS CONCERNED WITH MAKING SCHOOL PERSONNEL AND COMMUNITY PEOPLE AWARE OF THE ADMINISTRATIONS INTENTION TO DEVELOP A COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM PROGRAM AND WHAT EFFECT IT SHOULD HAVE ON CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION. THIS PRESENT YEAR HAS BEEN ONE OF BROADENING UNDERSTANDING OF THIS

CURRICULUM CONCEPT AND SECURING A BROAD COMMITMENT TO IT.

WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY "COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM?" FOR US IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, IT IS A CURRICULUM WHICH STRESSES THE ACQUISITION OF SKILLS WHICH WE HAVE IDENTIFIED AS ANALYTICAL, COMMUNICATION, CONSUMER/PRODUCER, SOCIAL/POLITICAL AND SELF ACTUALIZATION. THIS SET OF SKILLD EVOLVED FROM AN ON-GOING DIALOGUE AMONG SCHOOL PERSONNEL. IT WAS AND IS OUR BELIEF THAT MASTERY OF THESE SKILLS WILL GIVE OUR STUDENTS A DEGREE OF CONTROL OVER THEIR LIVES.

THE COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM IS BUILT UPON AN EMPIRICAL ORDERING OF THESE SKILLS INTO HIERARCHIES, FROM THE LEAST TO THE MOST DIFFICULT. STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO PERFORM COMPETENTLY AT ONE SKILL LEVEL BEFORE PROCEEDING TO THE NEXT LEVEL OF SKILLS.

THE COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM IS BASED ON A TRIAD (SOMETIMES CALLED A TYLER TRIAD) FOR RALPH TYLER - DR. HORN'S REFERENCE. THE POINTS IN THE TRIAD ARE: (1) THE BEHAVIORAL OR PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE, (2) THE INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND (3) THE ASSESSMENT TASKS. FOR EVERY BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVE WE WANT TWO INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND THREE ASSESSMENT TASKS. INCREASING THE NUMBER OF INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES OPENS THE WAY FOR MORE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE STUDENT. INCREASING THE NUMBER OF ASSESSMENT TASKS OFFERS THE STUDENT MORE AND DIFFERENT WAYS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HE HAS ACQUIRED THE SKILL AND REACHED THE BAHAVIORAL OBJECTIVE.

THE LIMIT OF TIME WILL NOT PERMIT ME TO GO TOO DEEPLY INTO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM.

I WOULD LIKE NOW TO SPEAK BRIEFLY ABOUT HOW WE ORGANIZE FOR CHANGE. I HAVE NOTED HOW WE ARRIVED AT THE SKILLS WE WANTED OUR STUDENTS TO MASTER. I SHOULD POINT OUT HERE THAT THE CURRICULUM WE HAD (AND HAVE) IN MIND IS KEYED TO 14 INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS. THROUGH A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY OUR DIVISION OF PLANNING THAT BROUGHT THE COMMUNITY INTO DIRECT PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM DECISIONS, WE CAME UP WITH 14 INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS ARRANGED IN ORDER OF COMMUNITY-PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE. I WILL NOT READ ALL OF THESE GOALS TO YOU, BUT WILL SIMPLY POINT OUT THE FIRST THREE HAD TO DO WITH STUDENTS DEMONSTRATING A COMMAND OF COMMUNICATION SKILLD, MATHEMATICAL, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SKILLS; AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS. OUR INSTRUCTIONAL PRIORITIES LAY THEREFORE, IN THE AREAS OF READING, SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS. THE OTHER DISCIPLINES WERE TO FOLLOW.

OUR INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH TO INITIATING CHANGE HAS BEEN PRIMARILY TWO-FOLD, FOCUSING ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT.

OUR STAFF DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS WERE INITIALLY AIMED AT ORIENTATION OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL, PARENTS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN WHAT THE COMPETENCY-

BASED CURRICULUM IS. WE WERE FORTUNATE TO HAVE SEVERAL CONSULTANTS TO HELP US DEVELOP A CADRE OF IN-HOUSE EXPERTS ON THE COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM. HAVING DEVELOPED THESE TRAINING TEAMS, WE CONDUCTED ORIENTATION SESSIONS DURING AND AFTER SCHOOL HOURS; ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS; FOR PARENTS IN THE EVENING; AND FOR BUSINESS LEADERS AT NOONDAY LUNCHEONS. WE ALSO WENT TO THE MEDIA TO SELL THE IDEA; THROUGH TELEVISION APPEARANCES, RADIO INTERVIEWS AND THE PRESS. WE SOUGHT TO SATURATE THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ALIKE WITH WHAT THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IS TRYING TO DO, TO ENCOURAGE THEIR COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT.

SUMMER 1977 FOUND US FOCUSING ON STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR LOCAL SCHOOL TEAMS. EACH TEAM DEVELOPED FOR ITS SCHOOL, A COMPETENCY-BASED STAFF DEVELOPMENT PLAN TO BE USED SYSTEMWIDE ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS.

SUMMER 1977 ALSO MARKED OUR INITIAL PUSH TOWARD CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT. UNDER THE DIRECTION OF SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL, TEAMS OF TEACHERS WROTE THE FIRST DRAFTS OF WHAT WERE TO BECOME THE FLEDGLING MODELS OF THE COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM WE EXPECT TO INSTALL (KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 12) IN ALL SCHOOLS. THE READING, ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM WERE CRITIQUED IN TERMS OF CBC PRINCIPLES; EDITED, DUPLICATED AND MADE READY FOR FIELD TESTING AND VALIDATION BY OCTOBER 1977.

VALIDATION OF THESE CURRICULUMS IS STILL IN PROCESS IN 29 PILOT SCHOOLS, WHOSE FACULTIES VOLUNTEERED TO TAKE PART IN THIS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT ACTIVITY. WE EXPECT FROM THIS PROCESS TO DISCOVER IF THEY, THE CURRICULA TEACH WHAT THEY WERE DESIGNED TO TEACH.

OTHER CURRICULA - IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE, BUSINESS EDUCATION, CAREER EDUCATION, ART AND MUSIC FOR EXAMPLE - ARE NOW BEING CRITIQUED AND EDITED. THE MATERIAL WILL BE MONITORED IN A LESS SOPHISTICATED PROCESS CALLED CURRICULUM REVIEW.

TO SUMMARIZE FOR A MOMENT, I HAVE GIVEN YOU A SHORT PROFILE OF OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM, DEFINED IN A BRIEF WAY, WHAT WE MEAN BY COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM AND OUTLINED WHAT WE HAVE DONE IN THE AREAS OF CURRICULUM AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT.

I SHOULD PERHAPS SAY A WORD ABOUT HOW WE ARE ADMINISTRATIVELY SET UP TO PROMOTE A COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM PROGRAM.

IMMEDIATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADMINISTERING THE PROGRAM RESIDES IN THE OFFICE OF INSTRUCTION. GENEROUS SUPPORT HAS COME FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT AND THE VICE SUPERINTENDENT WHO HAVE BEEN PERSONALLY INVOLVED IN MAKING THE PROGRAM A CITYWIDE EFFORT. THE DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION HAS BEEN ESPECIABLY HELPFUL IN MANAGERING THE VALIDATION OF THE CURRICULA.

THERE ARE TWO PERMANENT TRAINING AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT UNITS HOUSED IN OUR COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM CENTER. THESE

UNITS ARE THE COORDINATING TEAM AND THE INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT TEAM. THE COORDINATING TEAM GIVES THE OVERALL LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION; THE MANAGEMENT TEAM ASSISTS THE PRINCIPALS IN THE PILOT SCHOOLS. THE THIRD TEAM (INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT) NOT HOUSED IN THE CENTER, MAINTAINS THE DAY-TO-DAY SUPPORT TO THE CLASSROOM TEACHERS.

THE CBC CENTER IS LINKED TO THE SIX REGIONS THROUGH THEIR ASSISTANTS FOR INSTRUCTION AND PEER ASSISTANCE TEAMS. THIS RELATIONSHIP DOES NOT, HOWEVER, PRECLUDE DIRECT LINKS BETWEEN CENTER PERSONNEL AND BUILDING LEVEL CBC TEAMS. OPENS LINES OF COMMUNICATION ARE (I AM SURE YOU WILL AGREE) OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS ENTERPRISE.

AT THE EXECUTIVE LEVEL, THERE IS RUNNING DIALOGUE AMONG THE SUPERINTENDENT'S CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF AND THE REGIONAL ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS AND THEIR DEPUTIES. THE COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM COMTINUES TO BE THE MAJOR AGENDA ITEM IN ALL EXECUTIVE SESSIONS, SOMETIMES THE ONLY ITEM OF DISCUSSION.

THE FALL OF 1978 WILL MARK THE START OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OF OUR COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM PROGRAM. WE ARE GEARING UP FOR ANOTHER BUSY SUMMER OF STAFF TRAINING ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT.

YOU WILL HAVE PERCEIVED FROM WHAT I HAVE SAID, THAT THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION IN WHAT THE COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM IS ALL ABOUT

IS AN UNENDING PROCESS. PRESENTATION AND EXPLANATION OF THE CONCEPT STUDY OF ITS EDUCATIONAL POTENTIALITIES, SIMULATIONS OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES MUST BE REPEATED TIME AND TIME AGAIN. OLD HABITS DIE SLOWLY; NEW ONES ARE ACQUIRED JUST AS SLOWLY.

IF I WERE ASKED TO UNDERLINE THE MAJOR REQUIREMENTS FOR SETTING UP A COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM IN A SCHOOL SYSTEM (ADMITTING THAT OUR SYSTEM MAY BE SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS, AND ADMITTING THAT WE HAVE NOT REACHED IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR PROGRAM), I WOULD SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING:

1. INVOLVE SCHOOL PERSONNEL (ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS, PARENTS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS FROM THE VERY BEGINNING;
2. SELECT PERSONNEL WHO HAVE EXPERTISE AND SKILLS TO CARRY OUT THE PROGRAM (FREE THEM FROM THE DAILY ROUTINE TASKS).
3. DESIGN AND CONDUCT A FULL SCALE ORIENTATION PROGRAM FOR THE SCHOOLS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES;
4. SECURE THE MAXIMUM SUPPORT FROM ALL THE CONCERNED PARTIES;
5. MAINTAIN A PROGRAM OF EDUCATION AND RE-EDUCATION IN COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION FOR BOTH SCHOOL PERSONNEL AND COMMUNITY PEOPLE (KEEPING THE LANGUAGE UNDERSTANDABLE, AVOIDING EDUCATIONAL JARGON - IT TURNS

PEOPLE OFF);

6. CONDUCT INTENSIVE TRAINING SESSIONS FOR SUPERVISORS, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND TYPISTS ON CBC BEFORE STARTING TO WRITE THE CURRICULA;
7. MAINTAIN A RESEARCH ACTIVITY TO KEEP UP WITH DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA OF CBC;
8. MAINTAIN A EVALUATION SYSTEM TO DETERMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE OVERALL PROGRAM;
9. ADMINISTER A CURRICULUM VALIDATION PROCEDURE THAT PROVIDES ACCURATE FEEDBACK ON THE WORTH OF THE CURRICULUM.

WE ARE AWARE THAT THE COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM, AS WE PERCEIVE IT, CANNOT BE ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE. IT CANNOT SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS THAT WE AS SCHOOL PERSONNEL ENCOUNTER. IT MAY NOT BE THE PRESCRIPTION EVERY SCHOOL SYSTEM IS LOOKING FOR.

I DO HOPE, HOWEVER, THAT YOU WILL FIND IN MY DESCRIPTION OF WHAT WE ARE DOING, SOMETHING OF VALUE AND USE, SOMETHING EDUCATIONALLY PROVOCATIVE.

THANK YOU.